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ABSTRACT

This overview of information and referral services for Spanish speaking people surveys the problems and successes of bicultural-bilingual programs as they have evolved in the past decade, emphasizing the need for innovative and nontraditional approaches to these services for minority ethnic groups. Brief descriptions of information and referral programs in the public libraries of such diverse cities as Detroit, Miami, Oakland, East Los Angeles, and El Paso provide examples of the variety of services and accomplishments that information and referral programs have been able to achieve when a system makes a conscious effort at outreach. Much of the paper focuses on the South Bronx Project, relating through the eyes of its director the details of its many programs, the history of its successes, and the difficulties encountered. Such services are seen to be vital to the cultural growth of the nation, and it is felt that such obstacles as constrained finances and lack of minority clout are simply challenges that dedicated members of the library profession must overcome. There are 23 references. (EAA)

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Information and Referral Services for Spanish-Speaking People

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Seminar Paper submitted to
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By the year 2000, the group of Americans known as "Spanish-speaking people," "Latinos" or "Hispanics" will be the largest ethnic minority in the United States.[1] The phrase "Spanish-speaking people" is a general, somewhat misleading term for two reasons. First, the term encompasses Cubans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans and the smaller groups of South and Central Americans and Spanish persons. The lands from which these people originally came differ economically and culturally. Secondly, more than half of the "Spanish-speaking" do not speak Spanish. Among Mexican-Americans, 85% were born in this country.[2] Since "Spanish-speaking people" do have many cultural similarities, however, and since they have, rightly or wrongly, been treated as a single minority in most instances in this country, that term will be used in this discussion. Many of these people live in the barrio, a word which the American Heritage Dictionary defines as "a chiefly Spanish-speaking community or neighborhood in a U.S. city."

Some of the common problems which Spanish-speaking people face in this country are poverty, illiteracy, racial prejudice and language and cultural difficulties. In addition to these factors confronting libraries involved in I&R, there is another impediment. Latin America is generally

lacking a tradition of public library service. Library service in Mexico, Central and South America has, to a large extent, been restricted to the upper classes. In these countries, people patronize bookstores or pay a fee to a lending library.[3] Bruni Vergés, of the South Bronx Project of the New York Public Library, who spent many years in Puerto Rico, explained that people, rich and poor, buy many books, but that she grew up under the impression that "you have to belong to the elite" to join a library. Thus the free public library is an unfamiliar concept to the Spanish-American community.

Libraries which work with Hispanic migrant workers must deal with certain problems (or challenges, depending on one's point of view) which are inherent in the nature of migrant life. Many migrants speak no English and many are functionally illiterate. Most Spanish-speaking migrants are from Mexico, where, as noted earlier, there is no strong public library tradition. Some are illegal aliens who are wary of institutions in their attempt to remain invisible to the establishment.[4] Many laborers remain in the area for only eight to ten weeks. They work in the fields during the hours in which the library is open. Regular bookmobile stops do not reach them. Furthermore, the library worker cannot be oblivious to the problems of general poverty and

racial discrimination surrounding this group.

There are many adjectives which have been used to describe past efforts to provide library services to Spanish-speaking people in this country: sporadic, innovative, controversial, dedicated, disheartening and rewarding, to name a few. Many public libraries across the country have chosen not to treat these people as a separate group requiring specialized service. Other libraries have devoted energy and funds to Spanish-language collection development. A number of libraries, with varying degrees of success, have taken a step beyond passive in-house service into the active, less traditional area of Information and Referral. This paper will analyze some of the issues which surround library service to the Spanish-speaking. A number of I&R efforts will be described. The history and philosophy of one of these programs, the South Bronx Project, will be examined in depth with the aid of extracts from an interview conducted by the author with one of the project leaders, Bruni Vergés.

A number of library professionals have published criticisms of the ways in which libraries have tried to serve Spanish-speaking people. One of the most vociferous, Robert Haro, stated in a paper that he co-authored with Roberto Cabello-Argandona, that "among the factors accounting for poor library service to this [the Spanish-speaking] community

are: deficient collections; inadequate staffing patterns and underutilization of professional manpower; significantly low recruitment of students from this group to library schools; and lack of bibliographic control."[5] In another publication, Haro wrote that Chicanos have avoided the public library due to their perception of it as a "Gringo middle class institution."[6]

Others have noted the lack of experienced bilingual and bicultural librarians. The set of "Guidelines for Library Service to the Spanish-Speaking" prepared for the American Library Association by the Social Responsibilities Round Table explains that "bilingual" refers to a knowledge of the English and Spanish languages, while "bicultural" refers to the sharing of both the inherited Latin/Hispanic culture and that of the United States.[7] Describing past outreach mistakes, Nelly Fernandez commented that some well-meaning librarians, armed with a trip to Mexico and some academic Spanish, have failed to comprehend the needs and aspirations of the Chicano people.[8]

Another deficiency has been the "underutilization of professional manpower." Fernandez, referring to the use of Spanish-speaking non-professionals in outreach work, charged that "secretaries, clerks, and even library shelvers have

been indiscrimately used on the floor as reference people, in order to present a nice brown face that would create an atmosphere of credibility with the community."[9]

Such problems prompt certain questions. Why do such shortcomings exist? Why is library service to the Spanish-speaking so little and so ineffective? The answers are, to a large degree, political ones. In an era of budgetary paucity, administrators are scrutinizing library accounts, and specialized services are often the first items to be cut.

Moreover, these questions have, in the past, elicited some counter-questions: How much time and effort should a library spend for bilingual and bicultural programs when English is this country's language? Why should a library continue special services to Hispanics when the recipients often seem to be apathetic or oblivious to these services? Are not agencies other than the library better equipped to disseminate consumer, legal or educational information? Should illegal aliens be served if they do not pay taxes to support public libraries?[10] These are obviously complex issues for which no simple answers can be found. Some partial solutions to this emotional dispute may be suggested by the discussion of several I&R experiences which

follows.

Information & Referral

Thomas Childers has defined "Information and Referral" as the "facilitating of the link between a person with a need and the service, activity, information, or advice outside the library which can meet the need."[11] The need may also be filled within the library itself, with the library playing a direct rather than intermediary role. The term "I&R" encompasses the concept of outreach, wherein the library takes its services beyond the physical confines of the library building in an active search for potential patrons. Information and Referral and outreach programs may well serve a recreational function, but it is the dispensing of information specifically needed by individuals in that particular community that is the "raison d'etre" of I&R. This data is often procedural or survival-oriented and, as such, is a departure from the book-based scope of the traditional library.[12]

Public Library Information and Referral, edited by Clara Jones, gives an explanation of the rationale behind the I&R method of scattering storefront branches throughout a community. Branches, distributed evenly throughout a city, increase the library's physical accessibility to

residents. Moreover, branches with files and staff oriented towards local concerns are more likely to be viewed as neighborhood institutions, more psychologically accessible than the large, more impersonal main library.[13] However, the branch and central location should act to complement each other.

Detroit Public Library.

The case of the Detroit Public Library is cited in Jones' book as an example of these principles. In 1973 a small storefront I&R service called TIP (The Information Place) was established as a subset of DPL's Bowen Branch. TIP was set up in a Hispanic community center just a few blocks from the Bowen branch, and both Bowen and the main library were used as backup resources. Although in former years Spanish-speaking residents of Detroit had fallen into the category of "non-library users," the TIP service at the community center proved to be very popular. A bilingual, bicultural staff furnished patrons with Spanish-language materials and community-based information.

In order to assess community needs, library personnel employed outreach techniques in the form of "community walks"--walks to the neighborhood stores, barber shops, gas stations, etc. Jones quotes Michele Kapecky, formerly of the TIP

staff, as recalling:

> We told people, our own public, that the library can help them, that the library on the corner two blocks away can answer questions--not just questions about books, school and homework, but questions about their lives, their problems and their own community. The response was, in every sense, overwhelming. On the spot, people asked for a notary public, a part-time employee, and where and how to apply for Social Security benefits...They presented us, in very clear and concise terms, with their information needs, asking us to respond to those needs.[14]

A few months after the TIP was created, the decision was made to physically merge the whole TIP operation into the Bowen Branch. The move allowed an augmentation of TIP materials and referral services which had not been possible in the small storefront. This deliberately planned tactic was successful: Spanish-speaking citizens formerly using the storefront followed TIP to the Bowen Branch. Thus, a previously unserved group was introduced to the concept of the public library.[15]

Miami Public Library

A good example of non-traditional library service to Spanish-speaking people in need of information is the case

of the Miami Public Library's assistance to Cuban refugees. In the 1960's and 1970's huge numbers of Cubans left their homes, their jobs and their families behind them to emigrate to the United States. They left something more essential behind them--an environment with which they were culturally and linguistically in tune. Many entered the United States in a confusing whirlwind of activity, with feelings of anxiety for their futures intermingled with excitement and enthusiasm for this new land.

The Miami Public Library recognized the necessity of aiding the refugees who were trying to cope with these changes as they awaited relocation. In addition to placing Spanish book deposits in Freedom House, the temporary home of the refugees, the library sponsored many programs, including English language courses, Spanish-language films, and lectures (in Spanish) on topics of immediate concern to these people. Information was sought and received enthusiastically, with people asking how to start businesses or how to study for Civil Service exams. Many patrons wanted to know about U.S. immigration laws as they pertained to their family members in Cuba. Others requested phonetic spellings for words needed to deal with salespeople.[16]

In the book People Make It Happen, Patricia Brennan

Hanna made the following commentary regarding the Miami Public Library experience:

> If the purpose of outreach is to make library users out of non-users, then MPL has succeeded very well indeed with its Spanish-speaking clientele. Even if, as we are beginning to think, outreach means providing people with what they want and need to cope with the struggle to survive, and somehow to get beyond bare survival, whether or not they ever venture inside the library building, Miami can be considered successful at the work.[17]

Oakland Public Library

Oakland Public Library's "La Biblioteca Latinoamericana" is another example of an urban I&R project. As has been the case with many examples of I&R to Hispanics, La Biblioteca was set up in a community service building, a center run by the Spanish-Speaking Unity Council in this case. The Council provided a number of non-library resources within this multi-purpose building, including an employment agency and a mental health clinic.[18]

Among the diversified services offered by La Biblioteca Latinoamericana were art exhibits by Latin American artists; a newsletter, Los Rayos, containing library and

community news; Chicano press newspapers and traditional Mexican holiday celebrations. One regional project which was initiated by one of the librarians at this branch has been the translation of English-language subject headings into Spanish for the creation of a Spanish-language catalog. The forming of this type of link with other libraries, plus a policy of constant community feedback, has strengthened the image of this branch as an established neighborhood institution. Throughout the history of the branch a citizens' advisory committee has been instrumental in the project's planning and in the area of community liaison.[19] In a move typifying a number of libraries' policies, La Biblioteca Latinoamericana has adopted a loosely-structured atmosphere, in which there are few rules and no fines.

It is interesting to note that Bruni Verges of the New York Public Library dissented with this practice of slackening library procedures and regulations. She relates that when she was hired by the Cleveland Public Library earlier in her career she came to the conclusion that CPL's lack of registration and fines was condescending to Hispanics. She felt that the people were being patronized as if they were incapable of handling responsibility--"that this was discrimination in reverse." Through her efforts, CPL's procedures

were changed:

> We told the people, "You have to register and you are responsible for the materials and you have to bring them back like everybody else." And people accepted this. It is a matter of letting them know that there is no difference between the way we treat them and the way we treat other people.

Chicago Public Library

An example of a public library working in cooperation with an already existant community agency is that of the Chicago Public Library and the El Centro de la Causa. El Centro de la Causa, a multi-purpose community organization, invited the Chicago Public Library to share its facilities. The library transferred staff and materials to El Centro with the understanding that the library would lend its assistance and support to the existing programs of the center while developing programs and services of its own.

Programs and events arranged by the library included an all-day health program for adults; a monthly newsletter and calendar of community events; a lecture, in Spanish, on Social Security information; after school arts and crafts instruction; and Spanish folkdance classes.[20] The library provided materials and films for El Centro's Right to Read,

GED and Chicano Mental Health Training programs. The latter program trains Chicanos to become paraprofessional mental health practitioners. It is the only accredited mental health training class in the country to be housed in a community center.

In addition to its commitment to El Centro de la Causa, the Chicago Public Library has expanded its services in several outreach efforts. Through its Special Extension Services, CPL has established the groundwork for the Casa de las Americas housing center for the elderly to develop its own library. This has also been accomplished at El Hogar del Niño, a local day care center. Finally, the library has delivered reading materials to Spanish-speaking inmates at the Pontiac State Prison, where two library staff members have been offering instruction in creative writing, filmmaking and photography.[21]

Other I&R Programs

There have been a number of other imaginative and concerted I&R efforts directed at the inhabitant of the barrio. Some of the techniques employed by the East Los Angeles Public Library have been widely used even among small libraries with low budgets. The library utilized an outreach

bookmobile, Spanish-language film programs and bilingual story hours. The aid of community members was incorporated into the programming whenever possible. Local ballet folklorico groups and singers performed in the celebrations; local Boy Scouts acted as guards protecting the displays of local artists.[22] A "gang information project" has been planned which would include the gathering of information on Chicano youth gangs, the dissemination of this information to the public, and an attempt on the library's part to form a contact with the youths themselves.[23]

The Mexican-American Services Office of the El Paso Public Library has concerned itself primarily with collection development and, in particular, with the establishment of the La Raza Collection of materials on Chicanos and their heritage. From the standpoint of Information and Referral, a number of community information centers have been organized within El Paso's barrios. The Campaña pro la Preservacion del Barrio, for instance, has centered its activities around the preservation of the barrio as a cultural, political and social unit, through the provision of 500 items such as statisics on housing and population and Chicano political literature. Materials are selected according to the extent to which they portray social and political conditions in a realistic fashion.[24]

The Albuquerque Model Cities Library serves five barrios. Programs which have been developed over the past few years include classes and workshops in Spanish (bicycle repair, macrame, etc.), and a class in filmmaking designed for the production of films by and about local barrio inhabitants. Spanish language classes are conducted, in an attempt to facilitate communication between the Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking residents of Albuquerque.[25]

Bookmobiles

One of the most common outreach methods for reaching isolated rural poverty areas of inner-city barrios has been the bookmobile or "media mobile." In some cases great ingenuity has been applied to the conversion of the bookmobile into an individualized mobile unit outfitted with numerous types of media. Daniel Duran, who has suggested a number of planning considerations for the building of a media mobile, advises the mobile library worker to "drive into parks, take part in holidays and festivals, station the mobile unit outside community agencies and organizations, stop in front of people's doors. Take the library to the people if they can or will not come to the library."[26]

Denver Public Library's fifth bookmobile, "El Numero Cinco," was specifically designed to bring library services

to Hispanics in Denver. El Numero Cinco was equipped with a phonograph and records, art prints, games, bilingual reading materials, films that could be shown outside on a rear-view screen, large-print and Braille books, and folding chairs, tables and umbrellas. Art, sewing and guitar lessons were offered in the city parks. The bookmobile staff was bilingual and included a paraprofessional community aide, who acted in a liaison capacity. El Numero Cinco met with a good deal of success in forming a contact between the library and the Spanish-speaking Denverite.[27]

Bookmobiles have also been used in service to migrant workers. "La Biblioteca Ambulante," for instance, was a bookmobile project designed to allow the San Joachin Library system to reach farm laborers, migrant workers and other poor Chicanos living in isolated rural areas. People were notified, door to door and at the camps, of the bookmobile timetable prior to the scheduled runs. Special materials were provided for tutorial groups, youth organizations and migrant classes. Mary Reynolds, who was involved with this project in the 1960's, noted as a handicap the fact that it did not lead its patrons to larger central collections, since none were accessible. Nevertheless, "the project has shown that the so-called 'rural disadvantaged' Mexican-American can indeed be reached."[28]

A number of library systems, such as the San Joaquin Valley system, the Pioneer Library system and the Northeastern Dakota Library in Grafton have confronted the obstacles related to migrant service. The libraries involved have had to devise extremely pliant service patterns. In order to serve Mexican-American migrants, the Northeastern Dakota Library:

1) established deposits at churches, stores and laundramats of paperback books and newspapers from the migrants' home towns;
2) provided materials for Migrants, Inc., an educational program;
3) offered mimeographing and printing facilities for the production of a news sheet, combining local news with news of the various settlements and families;
4) used local Mexican-American radio programs to advertise these and other services.[29]

If the library is to serve the migrant worker, outreach is a necessity, not an option. There is probably no instance in which creativity and adaptability are greater assets. The library must look beyond the bulk of its collection and select Spanish books, easy-to-read books and non-print media before the matter of dissemination can be worked out. Most important, as Shirley Jarvella pointed out in her article

"Who Serves the Migrants?",

> Persons and not materials are the focus of library service to migrants. The creation of a program of service requires imaginative use of local resources, the inclusion of representatives of the group to be served during planning and implementing stages, and the ability of those initiating the service to respond to and learn from the people they serve.[30]

In a life of hard work and poverty, in which he or she may feel like a stranger in a strange land, the migrant worker deserves all the information, enjoyment and respect that the library can supply.

The South Bronx Project

The problems and rewards of providing library service for Spanish-speaking people in an urban environment become evident as one studies the South Bronx Project of the New York Public Library. It is still early to assess the future repercussions of SBP's recent termination due to lack of funding. A look into the past history of the Project, however, can be both exciting and illuminating.

The Project was founded through Library Services and Construction Act monies in June of 1967. The purpose of the Project: to introduce the value of library programs and materials in eight primarily Spanish-speaking (mostly Puerto

Rican) neighborhoods in the Bronx.[31] The backbone of the I&R program consisted of the utilization of "community liaison assistants."

Community liaison assistants were Spanish-speaking non-librarians, most of whom have Masters degrees in related fields. Project administrator Lillian Lopez wrote that the liaisons supplemented the staff of the eight SBP branches, serving as links between the community and the library. They established and perpetuated contacts with individuals in the community as well as with hundreds of community organizations of many kinds: schools, churches, youth groups, social service agencies, political groups and senior citizen groups. Organizations were approached by telephone, by letter and by direct visits. Library services were explained, verbally and through bilingual brochures, and program suggestions were solicited.[32]

Bruni Verges, who joined the Project as a Spanish specialist in 1979, explained that the primary vehicle for approaching community organizations was, and continues to be, the data collection needed for an exhaustive bilingual compilation of referral information entitled "The Directory of Community Resources."

Each NYPL branch in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island is responsible for gathering information from agencies

within the community. The branch retains the file of the agencies in that area, while the data collected by all of the branches is edited, arranged in an alphabetical organization name section and in an alphabetical subject arrangment subdivided by borough. The data is then assembled into a sophisticated monograph which is distributed to all branches. In addition to the reference desk copy, each branch provides circulating copies in a separate area designated for community information. Bruni Verges explained that:

> Anyone may go to the library and find out what is in his or her community and we also use it to refer people, for instance people who need to rent an apartment or who need day care. It is issued every year and it is probably one of the few directories in the United States that is collected in person and people do not have to pay to be listed.

A random glance at the list of subject headings serves to illustrate the diversity of listings: day care centers, colleges and universities, clubs (including chess clubs, yacht clubs and Jewish women's clubs), drug abuse centers, camps, dropout organizations, martial arts classes, homosexuals - counseling, consumer organizations, etc.

Expanding upon her concept of the data collection process as a means for community-library contact, Ms.

Vergés stated:

> I think that we have the right vehicle because we have to go out to collect the information for the community and this should not be a one-way street, in that you go out and collect your material and say goodbye. This is your golden opportunity to introduce the library to the community. And it's not enough to just leave a brochure. I think you have to find ways to make yourself necessary to the organization--almost create a demand for the library, because we shouldn't be apologetic for something that is that good.

Children's Programming

Although Ms. Vergés was involved in all aspects of the Project's planning and administration, she devoted most of her time to children's programming. She is quick to point out that programs planned for children were well attended and enjoyed by adults and that, reciprocally, few programs were planned for adults that did not involve young people. "Children's" programs included magic shows, ballet performances, Puerto Rican folk dances, and "very good legitimate theater."

One of the best loved programs for children was the puppet theater that was produced by the community liaison

assistants. The literature within the collection was used as a basis for the shows, e.g. South American or Puerto Rican folk tales. Everything--costumes, puppets, fliers and transportation--was done by the library workers.

An example of a program for young people which, unlike the puppet theater, is still being sponsored, is the vocational presentation, designed to introduce children to unusual professions.

> We are doing one on commercial art. We have a very fine artist who is a very successful person in the field and he is going to actually work with the kids and also tell them about the job market. We wrote a proposal for some filmmakers--Hispanic filmmakers--to introduce them to the community and have the young people find out how this group of people became involved and what are the possibilities for them. That depends upon whether we get the funding or not.

Cultural Programs

Cultural programs for people of all ages were a regular feature of the South Bronx Project during its twelve-year history. Thousands of events were sponsored by the library, or co-sponsored with other agencies, either within the branches or in the parks, streets, day care centers, playgrounds, schools or vacant lots. Some of the programs were

held entirely in Spanish, some in English, and most in both languages. Many were related to Hispanic heritage, with Latin American holidays and historic events being celebrated in various ways. There wer poetry readings, music festivals, art exhibits, storytelling, book discussions and films. The librarians and liaisons often used the birthday of an outstanding cultural or political figure, such as the Cuban revolutionary poet José Martí, as the basis for a commemorative gathering.[33]

Street fairs were held in the summer, and thousands of people attended. Ms. Vergés recalls that:

> We would try to tie it in with some different kind of information. The last year we had health information and we held free blood pressure tests. We tried to tie in the resources of the community to the services of the library so that the people could use them. We would invite organizations to set up a table and give out information. Anyone who wanted to could come and exchange information and we would bring it back to the library with us.

The South Bronx Project's celebrations tried to impart to Hispanics some sense of the history and traditions of their original homeland. Lillian Lopez once said that "If one person attends, the program is worth doing." By December 1973, almost 300,000 people had attended 5,535 library-sponsored programs.[34]

The Collection

Although a detailed study of bilingual and bicultural collection development is beyond the scope of this paper, both Lopez and Verges have expressed some concerns which seem relevant to this discussion. Lillian Lopez has complained that many librarians purchase fotonovelas (photographic "true romance" comic books) and Spanish-language picture books or comics and pat themselves on the back for having provided Hispanics with appropriate materials. She said that if this type of material is provided, it will be read, but that Spanish-speaking people should be encouraged to read the best materials possible, "materials that upgrade and inform our people."[35]

Ms. Verges concurred, adding that:

> Our people read very good books: they read poetry, they read the classics. It's amazing the demand for the classics. They also like the light stuff like everybody else. I buy medical and repair information--they ask for the same things that the rest of the community does. They want to repair their car or their house. They want to control pests, they want to take care of their indoor plants, and all the materials are available.

Cutbacks in the Project

In the mid-'70's, major budget cuts led to a cutback in South Bronx Project staff. NYPL instituted a policy of

"clustering," whereby members of the library staff were rotated from one branch to another during the course of the week in order to maximize the number of days and hours that branches could remain open.

Bruni Vergés recalls that people used to come to their branch and always see the same library staff.

> Now they see different people all the time, so there is no sense of identification. That may be one of the reasons why we are losing so many books through non-return and damages. It's like a team. People don't identify with baseball teams any more because in the middle of a series they trade you.

She added that since people seem to move more frequently than in the past there is a diminishing of family and community identification and pride. Ms. Vergés theorized that these trends have damaged the library's image, which has perhaps contributed to damage in the form of vandalism and lost materials.

Termination

In 1981, the South Bronx Project budget was cut by 53%, and the Project was terminated. Many programs, such as the puppet shows, were discontinued and some positions were eliminated. The community liaison assistants were re-assigned

so that there was one assistant for five or six branches, whereas before there had been one per branch.

At the time of this writing, the South Bronx branches, after four months, are still in the early stages of re-adaptation. Ms. Vergés feels that the library administration is doing the best that it can to ensure that individualized service will continue. It would seem, however, that the losses are bound to be felt by the staff and by the community. And, as for the future, Ms. Vergés predicted that:

> We expect more cuts because of the President [Reagan]. I have no illusions whatsoever. I think that he is cutting a lot of programs that affect the poor and he has no concept of what inner city schools are or what immigration is and I don't expect it to get better. I expect it to get worse.

I&R in the Bronx: Concluding Remarks

When Ms. Vergés was asked whether community liaison assistants ever expressed any fear about going out into the community, she replied:

> If the liaisons have a fear they don't express it, because they are hired to work in the community. Actually, as far as I know no one in the library staff has ever been attacked or molested. I think the South Bronx has a reputation that it

> really doesn't deserve. Most places you go to people respect you. I think they are people struggling to earn a salary and to support a family. And some are very frustrated.

The library which comes to be seen as a resource for dealing with this fear, anger, poverty and frustration, has met the basic challenge and responsibity of service to the Spanish-speaking people in the community.

Summary and Conclusions

Despite the financial constrictions of 1981, there is obviously a strong commitment on many libraries' parts to provide for Spanish-speaking people services which are creative, individualized and needs-oriented. Although there is an ongoing need for Spanish-language collection development, many libraries have also found flexible I&R techniques to be very effective. The need for innovative, non-traditional service is dictated by the problems inherent in Hispanoamerican life.

These problems, which include poverty, illiteracy, racial prejudice and the language difference, must be acknowledged by the library if they are to be challenged. Once this is accomplished, "Librarians may be used as cultural buffers and to bridge in some degree the cultural

and language gaps between the two different cultures."[36] The language gap is a large one, however, made larger by the atmosphere of intolerance which surrounds Hispanics. As Bruni Verges put it, "I think this is the only civilized country that treats bilingualism as a disease. The sad part is that you should build on what somebody already has. Let them learn another language but don't destroy the original."

One of the first problems that libraries must face is the lack of familiarity with the public library which is frequently encountered with barrio residents and migrant workers. The ALA "Guidelines for Library Service to the Spanish-Speaking" recommend that "Public libraries should make every effort to familiarize the Spanish-speaking with library procedures, requirements, location of materials, services, and resources in Spanish and/or English."[37] The library must reach out to educate the people to the fact that the library is available to them. Ms. Verges urges librarians to "contact the community and let them know that you exist and that you are there to serve them and that it is not an imposition for them to come and ask for what they need. It is a totally different concept that has to be introduced. But once it is introduced, it works."

After the library is accepted as a community resource,

the real work of information provision can begin. As Marta Ayala pointed out, "Outreach needs to be done only once, really. When your library has become established as part of the community, you become something that people want, and you have enough patrons."[38]

Information and Referral services need not, of course, reside within a huge library edifice. Bookmobiles and branches, including rudimentary storefronts, have been used, and space has been shared in pre-existing community centers. Librarians and paraprofessionals have also extended themselves beyond four walls into the streets, the prisons, the day care centers. Nelly Fernandez warns, however, that while the library should go to the people, it should at the same time encourage the people to come to the library. The library should be utilized as a backup resource to expand knowledge acquired through outreach programs.[39]

The type of programs offered have transcended the collection into the areas of recreational and cultural events. The focus of other programs has been the delivery of survival-oriented information and information about community resources, on issues such as medicine, housing and narcotics. Many libraries have co-sponsored programs and services in cooperation with other community agencies.

Robert Haro has stressed the necessity of consultation with community representatives in the planning of services. He also expressed the need for periodic review of existing programs.[40] This concept of "feedback," "stimulus-and-response" or "reevaluation" is a recurring theme throughout the literature on library service to Hispanics.

In an overview of the issues and components of I&R services to Spanish-speaking people, the personnel factor must also be taken into consideration. Lillian Lopez stated that:

> The staff for a library in a Spanish-speaking community should be bilingual/bicultural and sensitive to Hispanic community needs. In the absence of this, we should have library personnel who are understanding, flexible, and sensitive to the needs of people whose culture and language are different from those of the larger society.[41]

Spanish-speaking non-professionals can provide valuable assistance, but there is still a need for more librarians of Hispanic origin in the field, or at least librarians who can speak Spanish. Ms. Verges said "If you understand the language and you really care about the people, I think you can function."

Two solutions which have been suggested are that: 1) more

library schools offer scholarships for ethnic minority students, and 2) library students be trained in the practicalities of urban/ethnic librarianship, including the selection and acquisition of ethnic materials. It should be added that in addition to ethnic makeup and training, personal attributes such as those described by Lopez play a significant role. Not only must a librarian working with Hispanics be flexible and creative, but he or she must also be able to offer information and referral in a way that does not undermine the patron's sense of dignity. Ideally, of course, librarians working with any population should have these qualities.

One final issue which needs to be recognized is the current political-cum-financial constraints of this nation. Library budgets are tight, and many libraries are choosing to eliminate special services such as bilingual programs and materials. The Federal Administration's cutbacks in bilingual educational funding will undoubtedly be reflected in library allotments. Moreover, Spanish-speaking Americans do not have as much political "clout" as some other groups. There are probably a number of reasons for this not least of which is the fact that the poor tend not to have the financial pull that makes government officials stop and listen.

It is for these reasons that a group of Spanish-speaking librarians created the national organization called Reforma. Its purpose has been "to promote the advancement, growth, improvement, and implementation of more and new library and information services to the Spanish speaking in the U.S."[42] There have been criticisms of the organization; Ms. Verges feels that the group is Chicano-oriented, offering little for Puerto Ricans and Cubans on the East Coast. Nevertheless, a group such as Reforma could be used to voice to the government the needs inherent in library service to Hispanics. If libraries are seen as a tool of assistance, relief and education for Spanish-speaking Americans, then members of the library profession have a duty to reach out to this population within the library, out in the streets and parks, and through the political apparatus of Washington.

NOTES

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